



The more we sweat, the clearer our disdain for the Black Knights of the Hudson becomes. Anyone interested can pick one up online at authenticallyamericanbrand.us. FYI, neither we, nor any member of our family nor anyone we know has a financial interest in the company; we just thought it a pretty cool concept.

Next up, **Jim Blasko (28th Co.)** finally figured it was time he sent in a submission to *Shipmate*, and we must note, he picked the perfect opportunity. Shown below is Jim walking his granddaughter, Courtney, down the aisle last October...



...along with Jim, Mrs. Courtney Johnson, Mr. Adam Johnson and Mrs. Laura Blasko:



Jim noted, "It just seems like yesterday she was born and holding my finger, and then it was my turn to take her hand and place it in the hand of a fine young man". Courtney's husband Adam is a former Army Ranger who served 3 combat tours and is now working as a Project Manager at BETA Engineering. Jim observed he was thankful Courtney didn't ask him to wear his uniform, as...age has altered his physical dimensions! Eliza and Bob Gilman (28th Co.) were also in attendance, which brought back memories of Jim standing in as best man at their wedding. Time flies when you're having fun.

Here's wishing Courtney and Adam a long and blessed marriage.

Now, for the hard part, as we regretfully mark the passing of another classmate, **Jerry Bennett (5th Co.)**, who passed away April 30th.



After retiring from the cockpit, Benny remained very active in the Military Officers Association of America Southwest Chapter (MOAASW), serving in many positions including two terms as president. But what he enjoyed

most, other than, of course, travelling with his wife Liz, was working with the JROTC organizations at the local Naples schools. Benny proudly wore his Navy uniform to present awards to the cadets at their school assemblies every year and at MOAASW events in which the cadets participated.

Our deepest, heartfelt condolences go out to Liz and the rest of Benny's family. RIP, Benny: we'll miss that smile, shipmate.

*Home is the sailor, home from the sea,
And the hunter home from the hill.*
Magoo

'78

Life Membership: 81%
Donor Participation: 6.48%

Pres: **Glen Woods**

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As this is being sent out to the *Shipmate* editors we are still in "lockdown" or Phase 2 or whatever the term is. As a result, not a lot of news came my way. Ever since the start of this thing, a lot of us have had nothing but "Ground Hog Days". I also recall the Cheech and Chong "Sister Mary Elephant" routine where the substitute teacher, Sister Mary Elephant, has the class recite their essay on how they spent their summer vacation. Of course, the first kid's (Tommy Chong), essay is "On the first day of my summer vacation, I woke up; then I went to downtown, to look for a job; then I hung out at the drugstore. On the second day of my summer vacation, I woke up; then I went downtown, to look for a job; then I hung out at the drugstore. On the third day of my summer vacation, I woke up. Then I went downtown..." Well, my days are pretty much like that except - "I went ONLINE, to look for a job; then I hung around - the HOUSE." You get the picture. As this edition hits your mailboxes, I hope all this is over; the gap in social distancing has been closed, calm has returned to our nation, football is here, and the new Plebes have finally gotten some - though

truncated- kind of Plebe Summer. Perhaps they'll experience more of a Plebe YEAR to balance things out. Only time will tell.

Well, here are a few stray rounds and loose pieces of news I have collected.

Dan Mori (28th Co) wrote that at our 25th Reunion, his company-mates commented on how they enjoyed being with one another. They also lamented that it was a shame they only saw each other at the big reunions. That conversation became the genesis of the 28th Company "mini-reunions". Since our 25th, in-between our regular five-year reunions, they have held eight mini-reunions. The eighth - most recent- was held last October at Kill Devil Hills, NC. Dan reported it was their most successful yet. As Dan wrote, "thirteen couples and a token bachelor (someone had to clean the pool and get drinks)" attended. They rented a three-story house that accommodated the whole group. He added that "Pairs took turns cooking each night which allowed more time to swap embellished sea stories which have grown bigger at each reunion." In attendance at that mini-reunion were: Patti and **Chuck Behrend**, Jamie and **Tom Bond**, Lynn and Russ Brewer, Virginia and **Kevin Cheezum**, Anne and **Dan Fanelli**, **Stefan Fedyschyn**, Sara and **Mike Gasapo**, Brenda and **Tom Hamilton**, Vivian and **Dave Hampshire**, Shelle and **Al Kuntz**, Judi and **Dan Mori**, **Barry Pochron** and Olwynne Crampton, **Scott Strommer** and Eilene Johnson, and Michelle and **Brian Villalobos**. Talks are already underway for the next two mini-reunions. If you would like more information about the mini-reunions, you can contact Dan Mori at jam_750@yahoo.com.

Congrats to **Vance Berry (14th Co)** who in April was named President of Vintun LLC. Nice to see another Physical Science guy make good! Congrats also to **Ken Bowersox (19th Co)** who stepped up from his Deputy position to be the new Acting Director of Human Flight at NASA. Sox's predecessor resigned. As this edition gets submitted, I am sure his hands were full with the first launch of



'78: 28th Co Mini-Reunion #8

astronauts from U.S. soil in years. Congratulations to many of you who retired over the past few months. Among the ones I became aware of are **Joe Martin** (10th Co) and **Kim Tageson** (36th Co). Susan and Joe have now settled down in Williamsburg, VA - along a golf course of all things. Joe's in heaven. As for Kim, he wrote: "Our house in Wilmington NC area should sell soon and [the] move to Wake Forest NC will be complete. My son and daughter and their families, including 4 grandkids, live within 20 miles so the decision to live here was strongly encouraged by my wife. No grand plans yet. My grandsons Jim and Ben are itching to go boating again. At 5 years old Jim knows you steer away from buoys - well on his way to OOD qualification".



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Bravo Zulu to my 11th Co. companymate and our Class Webmaster, **Matt Elias** for the continued updates to our website. Matt provided the following:

- ✉ "Classmates, if you haven't visited the class website (www.usna1978.org) in a while, here is an update on the website and some new features that have been added in the last month:

We now have over 3,000 photos uploaded to the website that are searchable by classmate, company and time frame

- Almost 500 of Debbie Latta's professional photos from our 35th reunion have been uploaded
- Company photos and Company Officers from Youngster Year have been uploaded
- An Army Navy Spirit and Game Highlights videos page has been created under the Links section with almost 30 videos stretching back to 2012.

- Finally, a Professional Writings Page has been created and populated under the Classmates section. We are looking for more examples of our classmates' professional writing, but the page already has 39 articles ranging from **Gerry Roncolato's** [1st Co] articles in Proceedings to **Jack McCourt's** [1st Co] poetry. We even have several op-eds written by **Glen Wheless'** [24th Co] daughter Beth Bailey about her Dad and his Naval service, two articles by **Mark Fox** [18th Co] on Naval aviation, a great speech by **Glen Ives** [10th Co] on what it means to be a Navy grad and writings on leadership from **Art Athens** [18th Co] and **Al Baker** [10th Co]. We would love to add more professional writings of more from our classmates.

We welcome any thoughts and suggestions you might have for the website."

A lot of you have found a way to overcome the impacts of stay-at-home.

"Padre" **Al "Blues" Baker** (10th Co) looked after the "flock" and conducted an Easter Sunday sunrise service at Perry Circle. My 11th Companymate, **Phil Winters** and our "compa", **Ray Luevano** (6th Co), found a way to relive Bancroft Days and get by without going to a barber by giving haircuts- to themselves. (Though I think Phil's was done by his bride, Jennifer). I am not sure if the clippers used were someone's from our days in the Hall or not; but it did initiate a story from **Rusty Cone** (11th Co). Rusty wrote, "...got a pair of hair clippers for Christmas our plebe year, but did not start cutting hair till youngster year. Did a bunch of upper class guys, as well typing papers at \$1/ page. Was a pretty good business! Last head I cut was Marty [Drake] & Prentiss [Hall] our first class year and the OOD walked into the room. I believe Marty was in the chair but cannot remember. CDR Moffat was a bit upset!" I had to chuckle at that memory. I am sure there a lot of other stories out there of other illegal electrical equipment like toasters, toaster ovens, hot dog makers and popcorn makers, to name a few.





'78

As this leaves my desk, our nation is gripped in great crises. I'll leave you with a photo of our graduation as inspiration, encouragement and reminder because it was a day full of joy, hope and brotherhood. On that day we were filled with joy as we tossed our covers in the air. On that day our hard work and hope were fulfilled as we *found* the light at the end of our tunnel. It was a bright light of the promise of an even brighter future for all of us. It was a day in which we showed everyone, once more - and for always - that we all are brothers.



'79

Life Membership: 91%
Donor Participation: 4.69%

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Sec'y: **LCDR John "Wiz" Withers, USN (Ret.)**
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Facebook Group: **USNA Class of 1979**

Website: www.usna79.com

Greetings, 79ers!

Life today sure is boring, right?

Well I have the antidote to these "boring" times - '79er updates! Let's get right to it.

Responding to an earlier request for reunion photos, **Brad Post** sent along this update from those days when ski resorts were still open:

✉ It was Friday of the 40th reunion weekend. I sat down in the Chapel, waiting for the start of the memorial service, when a "stranger" leaned over and suggested he might know me. Turns out it was **Pat Wasilewski**, a guy I should know well after going through the submarine training pipeline (Orlando, Idaho, Groton) with him a few (40!) years back. He went East coast (*Tinosa SSN606*) and I went West coast (*Gurnard SSN662*), and we hadn't crossed paths since. On close inspection, he looked the same as he did in 1980.

We updated our histories, and I learned that Pat was living in Park City Utah, which was exciting because I was planning a week of skiing in Utah this winter. We met up again in February at Snowbird Resort, and Pat gave me and my wife a local's tour of the mountain. It was great fun reminiscing about all the trouble we got into as freshly minted ensigns, and it seemed like our skiing has improved markedly over the years.



Ski trip: **Pat Wasilewski, Brad Post, Shari Wasilewski (Brad's wife), and Chris (ski patroller at Winter Park Resort)**



'79: 26th Co. Front Row (l-r): **Bob Klocek, Mike Eriksen, Joe Hartigan, Alan Whiting, Todd Harris**; Back Row (l-r) **Burke Shade, Dave Frey, Hank Burns, Moe Montana.**



'79: 26th Co: **Jon Brazee and daughter, Todd Harris, Hank Burns, Burke Shade, Moe Montana, Steve Kremer, Dave Frey, Mike Eriksen, Alan Whiting.**

Thanks, Brad, for the note. And great news about your skiing improvements (*cough, cough*)!

Also with some post-reunion reporting is **Bob Klocek**, who gives us all an update from 26th Company:

✉ **Wiz**, here are two Reunion pictures for 26th Company. On Thursday night, we had an informal reunion at Heroes (formerly known as Weems Creek Tavern, for those who remember that dive bar and liquor store). Unfortunately, I don't have any pictures from that event. I have one from the Friday Crab Fest, and one from the Saturday Tailgater, with a slightly different cast of characters.

Classmates in the photos include **Burke Shade, Dave Frey, Hank Burns, Moe Montana, Jon Brazee, Todd Harris, Steve Kremer, and Alan Whiting.**

Others who showed up at some point during the various festivities but weren't around for picture taking - **Paul Kaus, Scott Belanger, Dave Meeder, and Jim Stetson.**

Hopefully I didn't leave someone out. Most opening conversations, after "what are you doing these

days?" gravitated towards health - surprising how many of us have some \$6 Million Dollar Man in us - I'm one, with a knee replacement - and are survivors of more serious issues, like cancer and kidney disease. Glad you're still there to write these articles!

On a personal note, having retired at the end of 2001 after 22½ years of active duty, I'll be retiring from the government at the end of July 2020. I'll have been a Navy civil servant for 18½ years, working for NAVSEA as the Engineering Duty Officer Community Manager. Considering that I took my first oath of office in July 1975, I'll have 45 years of service to the Navy at the time of my retirement. This COVID-19 shutdown, with no commuting and being at home all day, has me easing into the retirement routine, but with way too much time on the computer, and not enough time on the golf course! I'll send another note with an update after the retirement with some pictures.

Bob - thanks so much for the company update. Congratulations on your impending retirement, and